

Zero Waste Food Challenge (ZWFC)

March 2025



Introduction

The Zero Waste Food Challenge (ZWFC), is a modular course and resource created to help people reduce food waste at home. It was originally developed by the community group MOO Food in Muir of Ord. It was expanded and restructured by Transition Black Isle (TBI), as part of the Highland Community Waste Partnership (HCWP) to address the key steps in the food waste journey: Planning, Shopping, Storing, Preparing, Consuming, and Composting, whilst also supporting people to save money and make healthier choices. Where relevant, food packaging waste was also addressed.



The resource

The ZWFC comprised six PDF guides, one for each stage of the food waste journey, with an additional introduction guide explaining the impact of food waste on the environment and the wider benefits of reducing household food waste.

Supporting worksheets were also provided to help people track their food waste as they worked through the course, understanding what items were commonly going to landfill and see the impact of their food waste reduction activity.

Short videos were produced to provide a bitesize introduction to each topic and help with promotion. These proved easier to engage with for many participants than reading through the pdfs.

In order to increase its reach, the ZWFC was designed to be accessible in different ways, including online and through in-person workshops. In addition, a workshop guide was created to enable others to deliver the ZWFC in their communities.



Workshop structure

The guided workshops comprised six sessions, one for each module, emphasising practical strategies, with hands-on learning providing peer support and local network and resource building.

Participants received workshop resources 1-2 days before each session, with introductory materials sent two weeks prior to the first workshop. This early distribution aimed to help participants set the stage for the challenge by starting to measure their food waste. After each workshop, follow-up notes and handouts were provided, and all materials were made available in a shared drive to every participant across the series of workshops. This ensured everyone who signed up could follow the full challenge.

Participants also received a handy tool to support each module:

Workshop 1 - Planning	Magnetic shopping planner and LFHW spaghetti measure
Workshop 2 - Shopping	Reusable keep cups for drinks on-the-go
Workshop 3 - Storing	Special pens to write food dates on jars LFHW fridge thermometer and bag clips
Workshop 4 - Preparing	Natural vegetable scrubber
Workshop 5 - Consuming	LFHW 'Cooking with leftovers' recipe book
Workshop 6 - Composting	Bespoke compost bins, built by the Black Isle Men's shed

Each session included planned discussion time, where participants reflected on changes they had made since the previous workshop. These discussions were instrumental in sparking conversations around food waste reduction, sharing experiences, and exchanging tips and local resources.

Participants were also reminded to utilise the 'Measure Your Food Waste' worksheet, which helped connect workshop activities with real-world applications. Notes from these discussions were documented and shared, creating a valuable resource for ongoing reference.

Workshop Delivery

A total of three rounds of workshops were delivered, each building on learning from the last:

	Schedule	Location
Round 1	Fortnightly, Thursday evening (25 Apr - 4 Jul 2024)	Fortrose Free Church Hall/ Muir of Ord Community Orchard

Round 2	Weekly (1 Oct – 5 Nov 2024)	Muir of Ord Free Church Hall / Muir Hub/ Community Orchard
Round 3	Weekly (Jan – Mar 2025; including holiday break)	Contin Community Hall

Round 1 was primarily hosted at Fortrose Free Church, a well-known community hub with excellent kitchen facilities and good public transport links, while certain workshops were held at the Muir of Ord community garden and orchard, which were more suitable for sharing practical insights into growing spaces.

The change of village brought a bit of confusion and travel challenges, so we hosted all round 2 sessions within one village, Muir of Ord, across venues including the Church Hall which had robust kitchen facilities, provisions, space and ample parking for those who needed it; as well as Muir Hub, which was directly adjacent to the Community Orchard which was great for accessibility.

The third session was delivered by Contin community group CJTprojects, making use of the workshop facilitation guide and with support from Transition Black Isle and the Highland Community Waste Partnership.

Holding the workshops in different villages enabled us to reach more people and a diverse audience.

Integrating local resources

The ZWFC incorporated local businesses, initiatives and resources at its core, which supported buying local, increased community awareness of local resources and encouraged more use of these resources which spread to participants' households and wider networks.

We delivered the workshops with local facilitators who were experts in their field and added value by providing hands-on activities which participants could replicate at home. This was also an opportunity to showcase their business/service as local resources for the future.

These included the following:

Workshop 1 Planning	Batch Cooking with Fuggo King from the Highland Good Food Partnership
Workshop 2 Shopping	Make your own takeaway pizza with Nikky from Strathpeffer Artisan Bread
Workshop 3 Storing	Grow your own food with Konia the Moo Food growbox coordinator and Highland Joy garden designer

Workshop 4 Preparing	Fermenting with Fuggo King from the Highland Good Food Partnership
Workshop 5 Consuming	Cooking with Leftovers with Debbie, author and business owner of The Highland Home Cook
Workshop 6 Composting	Composting with Konia Tack the Moo Food Grow Box coordinator and Highland Joy garden designer We also partnered with the Black Isle Mens' Shed, who built bespoke compost bins for participants and attended the workshop to demonstrate how to build them.



Composters provided by Black Isle Men's Shed

At every workshop we introduced local resources and highlighted initiatives to support participants' food waste journey relevant to the topic. For example, sharing information on local [Community Markets](#) and scheduled dates, referring to the '[Our Local Larder](#)' website. Providing '[Sharing Shed locations](#)' busting myths around their purpose and encouraging use for sharing excess food and using it to save food waste.

It was also an effective platform to introduce packaging-free shopping alternatives, promoting reusable cups and local businesses promoting reuse.

It was also a useful platform to promote Transition Black Isle's wider activities, boost social media interactions and website awareness, and encourage participation and membership. Additionally, we would provide and promote information about the Black Isle Repair Cafe events and Black Isle Climate Cafe and themed film nights.

Promotion and Registration

The workshops were promoted through various TBI, HCWP and wider network channels including website, social media, newsletters, as well as press releases.

Workshops were publicised six weeks before the first session, allowing time for participants to engage with the introductory module materials and take their baseline food waste measurements.

Registration was managed through Eventbrite, enabling participants to select individual workshops or attend the entire series. For Round 2 we changed booking sites from Eventbrite to Ticket Tailor which was more comprehensive and minimised admin time around managing bookings.

CJT projects advertised through their newsletter, locally and on social media. They took bookings directly at their shop Contin Stores, as well as via email.

Participation and Engagement

A total of 99 people attended at least one workshop across the three rounds, with a total of 173 workshop places booked.

Number of people attending each workshop across the three rounds of ZWFC:

	1 Planning	2 Shopping	3 Storing	4 Preparing	5 Consuming	6 Composting
Round 1 Fortrose	11	11	15	14	<i>Cancelled*</i>	11
	49 people attended 1 or more workshops; 62 workshop places filled across the series					
Round 2 Muir of Ord	10	8	13	11	9	5
	22 people attended 1 or more workshops; 56 workshop places filled across the series					
Round 3 Contin	4	12	11	20	<i>Cancelled*</i>	11
	28 people attended 1 or more workshops. 55 workshop places filled across the series					

**Unfortunately Debbie the Highland Home Cook couldn't join us for round 1 and 3 due to personal reasons and we had to cancel the workshops.*

All participants who signed up received the ZWFC PDF guides, workbooks and workshop resources enabling them to access and follow the challenge from home while attending workshops which worked for their household and busy schedules.

The flexibility offered through Eventbrite allowed participants to select workshops that fit their schedules or their specific interests. However, as a result, some participants did not realise the workshops were part of a six-workshop challenge, with many only signing up for one workshop -although all participants gained access to the full ZWFC resource.

In round 2, the use of Ticket Tailor made the workshop structure clearer and so more people signed up for more than one workshop with that in mind.

Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback forms were distributed and collected at the end of each workshop, gathering immediate insights into participant experiences. Additionally, a follow-up online feedback form aimed to gather more holistic feedback on the overall impact of the ZWFC.

Paper-based feedback forms and a version accessed via a QR code linking to a Google form was provided at each workshop. Paper-based and carried out at the end of each session received the most responses. QR codes, while saving paper, did not have a good response rate. People scanned the code but many didn't follow through and

complete the form. Paper-based forms were not suitable for outdoor workshops (W3 and W6) so we received a smaller amount of feedback for those sessions in round 1. Holding these workshops based in Muir Hub, helped increase feedback responses due to having an indoor location.

A total of 131 feedback responses were received from all 3 rounds of ZWFC workshops, covering 90% of all participants.

Total number of responses received for each workshop session, across the three rounds:

Workshop 1 Planning	Workshop 2 Shopping	Workshop 3 Storing	Workshop 4 Preparing	Workshop 5 Consuming	Workshop 6 Composting
23	25	21	38	8	16

Demographics

The workshops attracted a mixed age range across all workshops however the age range 50-64 was more prominent. Under 16 year old’s were accompanied by their parents.

Results

Reducing Food Waste: A substantial 64% of participants reported that the workshops helped them reduce food waste in their households. Only a small percentage (9%) remained uncertain about the impact, while none reported an increase in waste. This highlights the effectiveness of the workshops in addressing this key issue.

Lowering Household Food Costs: Similarly, 66% of respondents indicated that the workshops supported them in reducing household food costs, aligning closely with the feedback on food waste reduction. The workshops effectively linked practical actions to financial savings, emphasising their dual benefits.

Encouraging Healthier Food Choices: Among participants, 73% shared that they felt empowered to make healthier food choices as a result of the workshops, a clear demonstration of their broader positive influence. This was especially notable in activities like fermenting and pickling, where participants directly associated these practices with health benefits.

Summary of Findings

The workshops have successfully reached their goal of encouraging behavioural change across the 3 areas. By fostering reductions in food waste, promoting cost efficiency, and inspiring healthier habits, the ZWFC workshops have proven to be an invaluable initiative. Framing the program around these three benefits has been key to attracting a wider audience, bringing food waste reduction and climate action discussions to individuals who might not typically engage with such topics.

Wider impacts

We also asked people for feedback wider benefits and impacts of the ZWFC workshops. Some highlight results include:

- 80% were 'Feeling more inspired to take action'
- 41% were 'Feeling ready to make a change to behaviour/habits / lifestyle'
- 11% were 'Feeling more hopeful about climate action and making a difference'
- 23% were 'Feeling more informed about the links between consumption/waste and climate change'
- 59% were 'Feeling part of a community of like-minded people'

Conclusion

The Zero Waste Food Challenge (ZWFC) helped households reduce food waste, adopt healthier food habits, and save money. This three-pronged approach attracted a broader audience, including those less likely to engage in climate action. Insights revealed that healthier living and cost-saving were stronger motivators in attracting a wider audience than climate concerns. By emphasising benefits like gut health and financial benefits, ZWFC widened the reach of climate action narratives and empowered participants to make meaningful changes in their homes and communities.

Specifically, the ZWFC achieved the following key outcomes:

- Encouraging better planning, shopping, storing, preparing, consuming, and composting practices to reduce waste.
- Promoting reuse by supporting sustainable habits.
- Supporting local initiatives such as community markets, sharing sheds, and packaging-free shopping.
- Raising awareness of environmental and financial benefits linked to reducing food waste.

Additionally, ZWFC provided an outlet for individuals experiencing climate anxiety or apathy, offering accessible ways to address climate action at household and local level without feeling overwhelmed or burdened. By fostering a sense of purpose through manageable actions, the program created a positive and inclusive experience.

ZWFC also highlighted the benefits of community building and provided social value for both participants and the community. Engaging with others in community-based activities helped participants strengthen connections, share resources, and cultivate a supportive network. This enriched the overall experience and inspired further involvement in climate-positive behaviours.

Aligned with the Circular Economy Act and Scotland's 2025 delivery strategy, ZWFC addresses food waste reduction through behaviour change and education.

As a proven resource, ZWFC offers a template for community organisations to deliver educational programs focused on food waste and composting, supporting Scotland's transition to a circular economy.

Participant feedback

"A lot of people are not aware of how much food is imported from abroad and it needn't be if we use our own produce better so this is the perfect workshop to explain this."

"Great atmosphere learning about using leftovers and meeting new people, it was a fun experience overall"

"I already planned meals ahead and minimised food waste including sharing food with neighbours, so my focus was more on achieving better compost. I plan to get a "hot bin" to compost any cooked left-overs that could not be added to the normal compost heap without attracting vermin".

"A useful refresher if you've done similar workshops in the past, and a crucial course for anyone wanting to learn."

"It's a really interesting course. I met many like-minded people and learnt a lot."

"An enjoyable evening, meeting like-minded people to think about how to reduce food waste in a fun and tasty way"

"Friendly, great bunch of people, choosing to eat and consume better."

To learn more, visit: <https://www.transitionblackisle.org/zero-waste-food-challenge-2024.asp>

The Highland Community Waste Partnership (2022-2025)

Funded by The National Lottery Climate Action Fund, and coordinated by Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Highland Community Waste Partnership brought together eight community groups in the Highlands to reduce waste and promote more sustainable consumption.

Learn more here: www.keeptscotlandbeautiful.org/highlandcommunitywaste/